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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the progress and outcomes of the implementation of the Colorado Preschool Program in 36 school districts from June, 1989, to May, 1990. First, the strength of community collaboration in supporting this early childhood effort is described. Second, the needs and accomplishments for the children and families served in the program are indicated. Third, the results of staff development are reported. Finally, the overall benefits of and recommendations for improving the program are reported. (RH)

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COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

ED330483

PROGRESS REPORT

1989-1990

A REPORT TO THE COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PS 019562

Piton Foundation
Clayton Foundation
University of Colorado
Colorado Department of Education
U.S. Department of Education

August 1990

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated

to Colorado's young children,

their families,

their teachers,

and the legislators

who serve them.

INTRODUCTION

Colorado legislators have recognized the importance of providing a program for four-year-old children in need of language development. In 1988, legislation was passed to allocate funds for the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), and in January, 1989, monies became available for school districts to serve 2,000 preschoolers in need of language development and their families. To assist the development of quality early childhood programs, the Clayton Foundation, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Piton Foundation, and the INREAL Outreach Education Center, University of Colorado, Boulder, formed a partnership to conduct a three-phase staff development and evaluation program for the CPP. This is a report of the second phase of staff development and evaluation.

Language skills and parent participation are critical factors for academic success. The goals of CPP are to improve children's communication skills in oral and written language and to create family-school partnerships. This document is a summary of the progress and outcomes of the Colorado Preschool Programs in 36 districts from June, 1989 to May, 1990.

First, the strength of community collaboration in supporting this early childhood effort is described. Second, the needs and accomplishments for the children and families served in the program are shown. Third, the results of staff development are reported. Finally, the overall benefits of and recommendations for the program are given.

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BENEFITS OF THE COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The Colorado Preschool Program is improving the lives of children and families. Many of the benefits will be seen in the years to come, but positive changes are also visible today. Here are some of those benefits:

- Communities are supportive of quality early childhood education and services to young children and their families.
- The Program is serving children and families whose needs are associated with educational failure.
- Preschool staff members are committed to working with families.
- Preschool staff members are working to provide optimal learning of language skills.
- Children are showing gains in their language and communication skills and are becoming more independent learners.
- Families are participating in their children's preschools and are very satisfied with the programs.
- Families and preschool educators are committed to building partnerships.

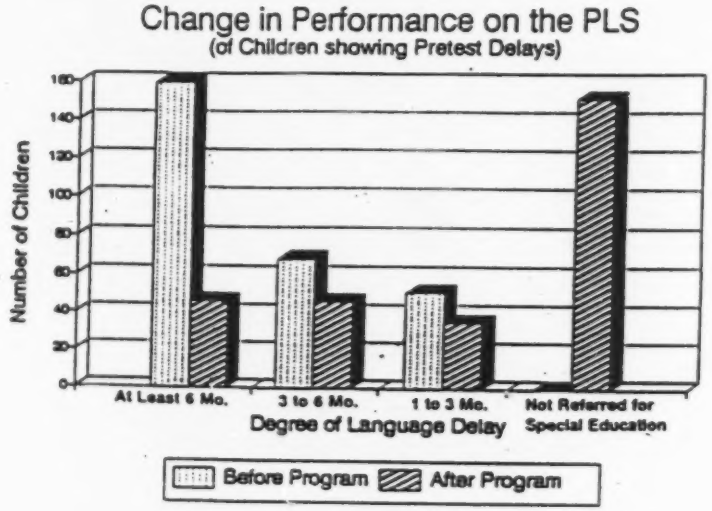
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Parents and educators from the Colorado Preschool Program applaud the efforts of the Colorado legislators in creating this program for at-risk preschool children. They would like to see this support continued and expanded. In this spirit, the following recommendations are made to the General Assembly:

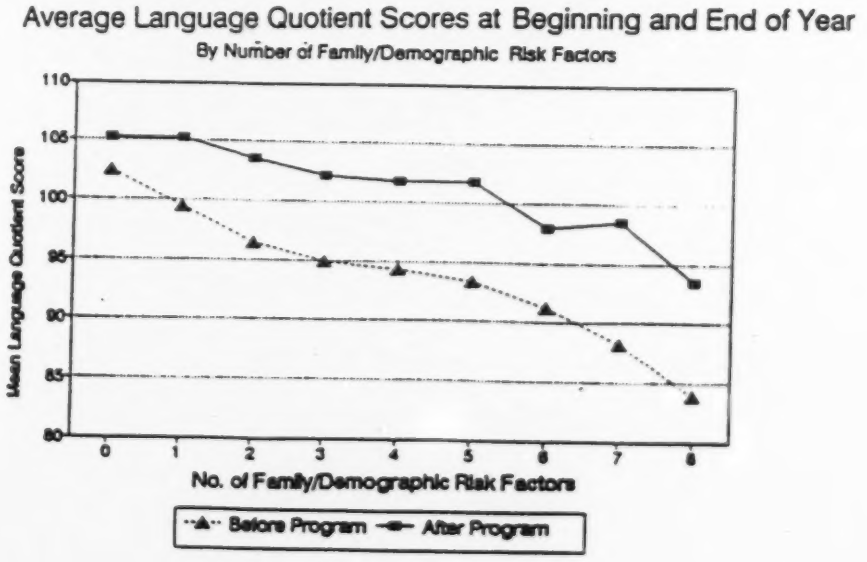
- Establish and maintain preschool programs based on National Association for the Education of Young Children standards.
- Maintain eligibility criteria so that children with a variety of risk factors can be served based on local conditions.
- Integrate preschool programs so that students do not become "labeled" or stigmatized.
- Support the development of children's first and second languages.
- Support the continued growth of Family-School Partnerships.
- Continue training opportunities to assure well-qualified early childhood educators.
- Support program innovations which increase opportunities to work with families.
- Identify exemplary programs that can be resources to educators and others interested in quality preschools.
- Provide sufficient funding for the program to be implemented, expanded, and evaluated.
- Follow the progress of students/ families through high school to study the meaningful effects of the program.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Each district examined child change in language and other skills by administering at least one of four early childhood measures at both the beginning and the end of the school year. Large numbers of children showed clear or probable language and/or other developmental delays in their fall (pretest) screenings. The scores in the spring retests, on the average, showed gains beyond those due to maturation alone. Averages at the end of the year indicate that the large majority of children will begin kindergarten in the fall of 1990 on par with their classmates. This is an example of how the children's language changed.



Children with the greatest needs make the greatest gains. Gains in the childrens' language scores are positively related to the number of risk factors. This suggests that the benefits of the CPP were greatest for those with the greatest needs.


Average Language Quotient Scores at Beginning and End of Year
By Number of Family/Demographic Risk Factors
Mean Language Quotient Score
No. of Family/Demographic Risk Factors
Before Program
After Program

OUTCOMES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Training and technical assistance were provided to early childhood educators to develop high quality early childhood programs, partnerships with parents, and to conduct program evaluation. During the school year and summer, 10 workshops and 16 classes were attended by 485 CPP educators and parents from 36 districts.

For Children, staff members are learning:

- how their talk and work makes a difference in children's learning
- alternative methods of evaluating language
  - observation
  - portfolio assessment
  - video tape analysis
- how to support child-centered learning from preschool through third grade

For Families, staff members are learning to:

- establish family-school partnerships
- make schools an inviting place
- account for parent participation
- account for new services to families
- measure attitudes of parents about the CPP

For Community/Program, staff members are learning:

- to support the work of early childhood advisory councils
- techniques for evaluating program needs, processes, and effects

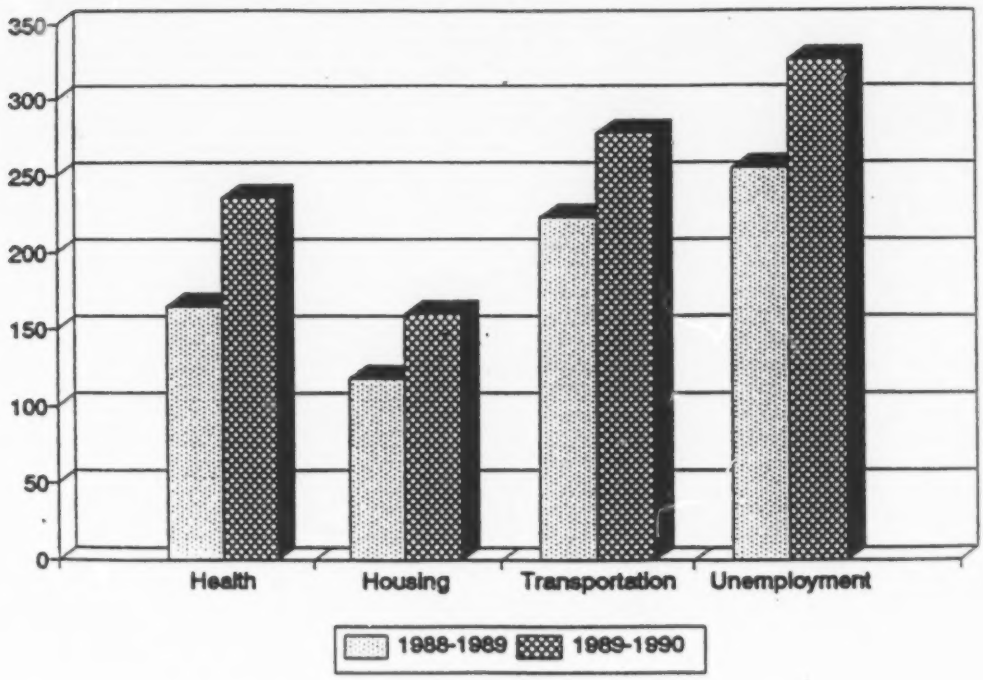
For themselves, staff members are:

- identifying their strengths
- enjoying children more
- evaluating their beliefs and practices
- understanding the impacts of their practices

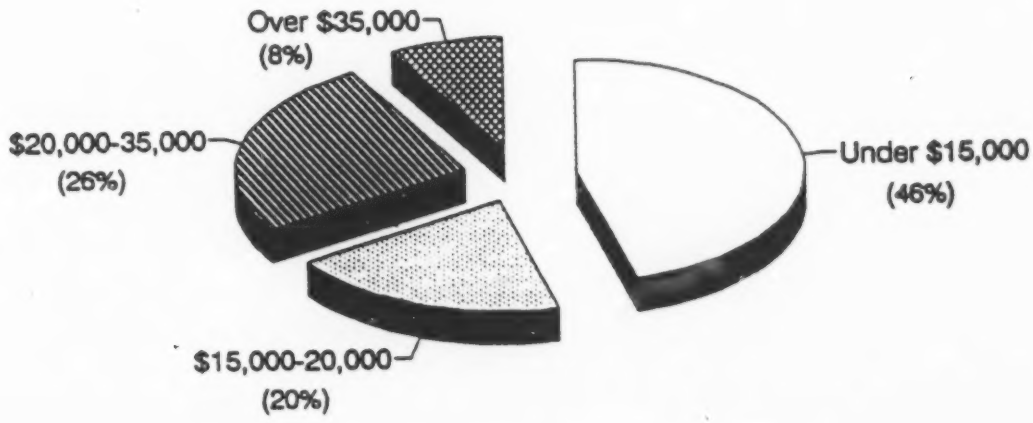
Again, I'm very impressed with the classes and teachers. I've gained more this summer than in all six year years of higher education. Truly! I've challenged myself to think, to use my brain - to be autonomous - and I do feel successful. I enjoy the closeness that we all gain: among class members and between teachers and students. It's been great! Thanks.

CPP Teacher

NEEDS OF PRESCHOOL FAMILIES
NUMBER OF FAMILIES



TOTAL FAMILY INCOME
1989-1990



OUTCOMES FOR CHILD CHANGE

CASE STUDY

Susie lived with her mother, a single parent, and a baby sister. Since Mom worked every day, Susie stayed with Grandma during the day. At the young age of four, Susie was not a happy child.

Susie's language was delayed. She talked more like a two-year-old than a four-year-old. Besides her difficulty with language, Susie was very much overweight. Other children teased her about being fat. Since Susie didn't have the language to express her feelings when teased, she learned to deal with such situations the best way she could -- she became physically aggressive. Susie was bigger and stronger than other children her age, so it was easy to use that to her advantage to let other children know what she wanted.

Susie's mother and grandma didn't know how to deal with her aggressive and unhappy behavior. They thought she was naughty and didn't know it was because she couldn't use language very well. To many uninformed adults, Susie was just a brat.

When the opportunity for preschool screening was presented, Susie's mother was eager for any support she could find for dealing with her frustrating little girl. The language screening showed a 15-month delay in how Susie was able to express herself. She was enrolled in a CPP class.

At first, other children were afraid of Susie. They soon learned that if she didn't like something, she let them know by hitting and kicking. But the knowledgeable teachers understood that Susie was communicating the only way she knew how. They explained to Susie's mother and grandmother that behind Susie's behavior, there was a genuine effort to play with other kids. Instead of punishing Susie for her behavior, the teachers helped by giving Susie the language she needed. When Susie was observed hitting a child after being called "Fatso," the teacher would say, "You don't like being called that. You don't want anyone to call you Fatso." For the first time, Susie's real intentions were acknowledged and expressed for her.

Susie began to see that the power of using language was even more powerful than physical force. She began talking more. Her language was still not on par with some of the other children, but the more she talked, the fewer problems she had with her behavior. The difference was obvious at home as well as at school. Susie was sharing, interacting, and making friends. Susie began taking more risks when she knew preschool was a safe place. The more she talked, the more her language improved. As her language improved, she made gains in social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Today Susie is in kindergarten. She is living with Grandma and Grandpa. Grandma is very pleased with Susie's growth. Her kindergarten teacher says, "She is functioning well in her class."

OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

An important part of the Colorado Preschool Program is to collaborate with agencies in the community. The CPP Advisory Councils and the communities are coordinating efforts to support young children and their families.

Advisory Councils supported Colorado Preschool Programs by:

- organizing an Advisory Council
- writing the preschool grant
- developing policies and goals
- organizing the preschools
- establishing enrollment criteria
- supporting the preschools
- monitoring the program
- supporting parent participation
- communicating with the school board
- promoting public relations

CPP Service Delivery Types

School districts have worked with community agencies in establishing the preschool classes. Four types of resources are being used by the districts to create the programs.

- 17 School districts provide the program
- 15 School districts contract with other public agencies
- 10 School districts contract with private businesses or agencies
- 2 School districts contract with Institutions of Higher Education
- Some districts use two or more resource types

OUTCOMES FOR FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Demographic information was gathered on families who were served by the preschool program.

- More than one in five of the children live in homes where a language other than English is spoken as the primary language.
- More than half of the children served are from ethnic minority families.
- Thirty percent of the children live in single-parent households.
- More than one in four children have a mother who did not complete high school.
- Of the fathers living at home, one in five did not complete high school.
- Two-thirds of the families live on less than $20,000 per year.

The family and school formed a partnership to support the program.

- Families and teachers worked together in the child's preschool program.
- Families were assisted in finding other needed services.
- Families were very satisfied with the CPP.
- Families participated in training with CPP teachers.
- Families continued their own education through participation in the CPP.

I myself, as a grandparent (guardian), have really enjoyed this program. The staff has gone out of its way to help us in our situation....

Grandparent

The change from parent involvement to partnership is a shift of power and decision making.

CPP staff Member